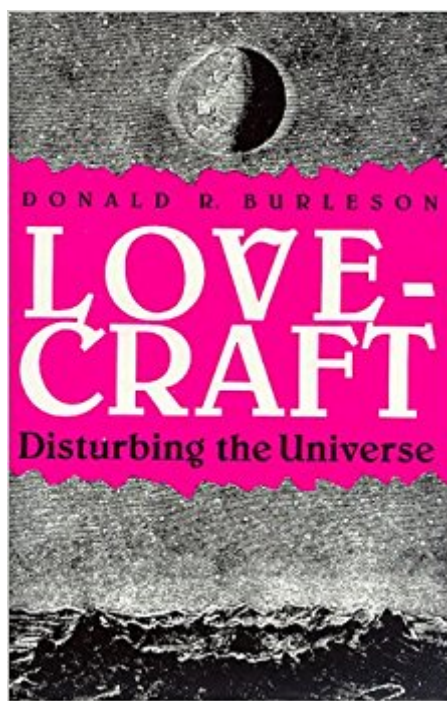


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Lovecraft: Disturbing The Universe



Synopsis

Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890–1937) has been described variously as the successor to Edgar Allan Poe, a master of the Gothic horror tale, and one of the father of modern supernatural fantasy fiction. Published originally in pulp magazines, his works have grown in popularity since his death, so that more than thirty editions are currently in print. Yet only recently has Lovecraft received serious attention from literary critics. And until now no one has examined his work from a post-structuralist perspective. Donald Burleson fills that void, for the first time in an extended study bringing the resources of deconstruction to bear on the works of this modern gothicist. In an introductory overview, Burleson gives an unusually readable account of deconstruction theory and terminology, a field all too often discussed in densely opaque fashion. He goes on to deconstruct thirteen Lovecraft stories, delving into their fascinating etymological mazes, abundant ambiguities, and shifting levels of meanings. His lively and remarkably jargon-free readings explore Lovecraft's rich figurality to unprecedented depths. At the same time Burleson develops the view that in practicing self-subversion and structural displacement, literary texts perpetuate themselves. His final chapter explores the broad themes running through Lovecraft's fiction, arguing that these themes in themselves prefigure the deconstructive gesture. This insightful and provocative volume will go a long way toward displacing the label of popular writer and establishing Lovecraft as an important figure in American literature. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

This is a book that you will either toss aside with a shrug, or that will keep you enthralled for a couple of reading evenings. There's no real middle way. Still, for Lovecraftians it is a must-have must-read. Burleson applies deconstruction to the texts in a marvellous way, and yet at the same time it sometimes also becomes rather repetitive. But this is so because deconstruction is (in my opinion) also a methodology. At any rate, this book is an eye-opener to the province of the text and how it will never allow itself to be pigeon-holed, or to be fully understood, or to reach a definite interpretation. As Burleson points out texts are always self-subversive, and arrive at aporetic standstills, though simultaneously also lifting the tip on infinity within the text. And where could one do that better than 'in' Lovecraft? From the opening introduction on deconstructionism, which is very lucid and should be understandable by readers that have not encountered it before, to the final concluding chapter, this book is like spit and mud in your eyes that should be washed in a stream after finishing it, and then to read the book again. You will not only regard Lovecraft 'texts' differently, but also every other text you encounter or re-read will never be the same again. The stories selected for the deconstructive criticism ("The Call of Cthulhu", "The Shadow over Innsmouth", "The Cats of Ulthar", "The Nameless City", and more short ones) are representative for Lovecraft's recurring themes and motifs, and handled in clear understandable speech and intellectuality. My only complaint with this book is that it is a bit too short - I would have liked to see more attention to the stories, but this is a dilemma for which Burleson doubtlessly stood himself: it is a decision between fewer stories thoroughly (as far as that can be done with deconstructionism) explored, and more stories explored with provocative motivations for further personal investigation on the reader's part. Well, the enthusiasm Burleson leaves one with is more than enough for that. If you like Lovecraft and literature, your library shouldn't be without this.

A fascinating analysis of some of Lovecraft's central works through the tool of literary deconstruction. I enjoyed this book and found it an easy enough read, despite any formal study in literary criticism. (The author provides a helpful introduction to deconstruction.) Like the heading says, get it if you're a hardcore Lovecraftian, or if the idea of seeing the themes of a story analysed appeals to you; or preferably both.

Donald R. Burleson brought a new look at the various tales written by the father and master of modern horror, H.P. Lovecraft. He dives into a number of tales and steadily deconstructs them piece by piece. In doing so I was shown an aspect of the tales in which I had never looked at or thought about before. Generally first by closely observing what is going on in each tale followed by seeping

into even tinnier details such as word choice and the historical roots in language. This book is not for the casual reader, rather for those interested in the study of Lovecraft and his work.

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